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CITY MANAGER PLAN IN OHIO¹

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City manager government will soon be in effect over some 250,000 people living in eighteen cities. One hundred seventy five thousand of these people live in Dayton and Springfield—cities which are now completing their first year under this type of administration. Any deductions to be made regarding this type of government as it operates in the case of larger communities, must be drawn from the experience of these two municipalities over the past year.

A most common test of the character of government is economy, although that is no fairer criterion of worth than it is with shoes, furniture, or tobacco. Cheap government is not necessarily good government. Even were the revenue and expense schedules for the present year available, it would be difficult to make an impartial analysis and comparison of finances in Dayton and Springfield under the two types of government. In Springfield the most concrete evidence of economy has been the reduction of the floating indebtedness from \$100,000 to \$40,000, although the resources were slightly less than those of former years. In Dayton the net expenditures for 1914 from ordinary sources will be approximately \$78,000 more than for the previous year. However, with this increase the general revenues were charged for street repair, street lighting, and emergency health work, formerly costing a much larger amount from bonds.

It must also be recalled the old government of this city for a period of six years past had operated with an average annual deficit of \$60,000, all but \$125,000 of which had been funded in long term securities. The issue of nearly \$1,000,000 in flood

¹ A paper read at the eleventh annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.

emergency bonds in 1913, and the operation of several departments from this revenue for a number of months enabled the previous administration to reduce this liability by \$43,000 without actual economies. These facts are stated only to indicate that the unusual conditions in 1913 render a comparison of expenditures between the last year of the old and the first year of the new government somewhat difficult, if not actually unfair.

A study of the tax rates is futile. For 1915 the total rate has been reduced in both cities, in Dayton it being \$13.60 per \$1000 of valuation as opposed to \$14.40 in 1914. This decrease in rate is indicative of nothing so far as economy is concerned, as the increase in taxable property will produce \$100,000 revenue additional. This increase in revenue and decrease in rate, however, was secured only by reducing the actual needs of the sinking fund by \$75,000. This action would appear deplorable, yet if the enormous increase in debt service, brought about by the careless issue of bonds is taken into consideration, it is perhaps justified.

Until more complete and accurate data are made available by the closing of the books for the present year, only these financial facts remain:

In Springfield the new government has been more economical, and naturally reduced the floating debt; in Dayton the administration had more money than its predecessors; did not materially reduce the floating debt, and did not operate at the usual deficit; did pay from current revenues, in excess of the increase for the year, expenses formerly paid from bonds. Financial criticism must therefore be disregarded, and the success of these two administrations be judged properly from their actual accomplishments.

CITY BUDGET

Probably the care in the preparation of the city budget is most significant in indicating the attention which is given to the financial problems of a municipality. The charter of Dayton is one of the few which provide in detail how the budget shall be made, and these sections appear almost verbatim in the Spring-

field document. In this latter city, however, there was not time to conform to this plan and the model authorized by the State prevailed. Dayton has endeavored to formulate an appropriation ordinance along the most modern lines and for 1915 is making changes which will bring even more improvement. Funds are appropriated to the main functions of the city government under different heads—that is, personal service, contractual service, sundry charges, supplies, materials, and equipment. Each one of these main divisions is again subdivided and entered in the accountant's book, but this further allotment is subject to change by order of the city manager. This secures all the advantages of a detailed budget yet eliminates the necessity of frequent transfers by ordinance. Introducing such a document into a city operating under a radically different system and where comparative data were lacking necessarily created some friction. There have been many transfers, and vouchers have been charged to improper codes. These results would have followed in any city making a similar change. The advantages have come from careful estimates which allowed a larger program of work on limited funds, and which permitted, without serious handicap, the reductions brought about by unexpected curtailment of revenues. In budget making and budget publicity, Dayton and Springfield compare favorably with some ten or a dozen of the most progressive cities.

ACCOUNTING METHODS

Both Springfield and Dayton have accounting systems equally advanced and which are duplicated by few. In neither city has the installation been completed but they are sufficiently under way to measure results. In place of a record of cash receipts and cash expenditures suitable to a cross roads grocery, and which prevails in practically every municipality, these two cities have made possible a balance sheet, supported by distinct schedules for each public utility and industry owned; provide an adequate control over permanent property, equipment and stores; and have definite knowledge of accounts receivable and of liabilities in-

curred, so that no revenues may escape collection, nor appropriations and allotments be overdrawn. Adequate centralized accounting has in Dayton insured the payments of several thousand dollars of revenue formerly lost; made overdrafts impossible; discovered errors of over two hundred thousand dollars in sinking fund calculations; makes all disbursements by check; and controls the cost records installed over street repair, street cleaning; garbage and ash removal, etc.

It is in the purchasing of supplies that the most notable savings have been made and which will amount to more than \$33,000 on an expenditure of \$200,000. A department may not purchase until its requisition has been approved by the manager, and the purchasing agent does not order until he is assured by the accounting division that appropriated funds are available and have been properly encumbered therefor. Prices are 10 per cent to 90 per cent less than those formerly paid. Bills are discounted at 2 per cent for payment within ten days after the first of the month following. Recognizing that prices fluctuate, larger savings taken at random are: printed matter, \$1000; cylinder oil, \$1000; coal, \$400; meat, \$560; fire hose, \$16,000, etc. Similar savings, which have gone into increased services, are reported from Springfield. A beginning on the standardization of supplies and materials has been made in Dayton.

PUBLIC WORKS

In the department of public works, both cities under discussion have made notable progress, possibly because the city managers are men of engineering training. It would be anticipated that their primary attention would be given to this branch of city government rather than to other features. In Springfield the manager reports a reduction in engineering cost from something over \$10,000 in 1913, to \$6700 in 1914, and speaks of improvements costing nearly \$600,000. In Ohio however, engineering costs are usually charged to bond issues, so these figures are not particularly impressive.

It is more essential to know that by economies they were able

to double the amount of money expended for street repair. In street cleaning and garbage removal an analysis of the figures of 1913 and 1914 shows a saving of over 25 per cent with a large increase of service.

In Dayton the extension of service has been notable. Inspection of public contract work has been completely reorganized and contractors rigidly required to conform to specifications; street repairs are being made entirely from public revenues with the exception of a balance from bonds issued in former years; there is almost double the amount of street cleaning; streets in the business section are flushed for the first time in the history of the city; collection of rubbish and ashes has been resumed after a year of lapse and made efficient; and reasonably adequate garbage collection is to be had for the first time in ten years. In the division of water every effort has been made to secure a supply more nearly equal to the demand. Pumping machinery has been overhauled, leaks investigated; pressure increased; and in the face of increased pumpage there has been a decrease in the amount of coal burned. A municipal garage has been established; all cars labeled; their use placed under control; and record of costs installed.

This discussion of public work improvements leads to the necessity of a program for the future. The principal weakness of public construction in Dayton has been the absence of a plan which could be adhered to over a long period—feeder sewers run into sewers of smaller dimensions; and water pipes and fire plugs have been placed without regard to the anticipated growth of the community. These are, however, uniform defects of local government. However, in Dayton a conscientious effort has been made to outline work in many directions. The water plans which have been recently completed will cover sixteen years of construction; a sewer survey costing \$30,000 is under way; a comprehensive study of public waste disposal has been made; an investigation of adult delinquency is being completed, and upon its findings will be based the future correctional policies of the municipality. The administration may change, and the present appointed executives make way for others, but their successors

will have a definite plan for public construction which they must follow or set aside only after consideration. They will not be required to go ahead on guess work, or on plans of only one or two years anticipated duration.

PUBLIC WELFARE

Both Dayton and Springfield have definitely provided in their charters for a department of public welfare which shall direct activities having to do with the social and moral conditions of the citizen—health, charities, recreation, corrections, etc. I cannot speak of the success of this department in Springfield except to say that they have secured a full time health officer and that the work of this division has been largely increased.

In Dayton civic progress through the welfare department has been extraordinary and the administration may lean most heavily for support upon the results secured. The health division was studied and reorganized. In addition the nursing of the Visiting Nurses Association and of the Tuberculosis Society has been brought under city management. This single control of public nursing has resulted in an infant death rate from 40 per cent to 50 per cent lower than that in three years previous. The removal of insanitary conditions; the regulation of vacant property; a more careful inspection of dairies and places where food products are sold; the stringent regulation of quarantine; and the inspection of school children which have been exposed to contagion lessened morbidity and has reduced the death rate by two points in a thousand, the equivalent of some two hundred and fifty lives. This is notable, and I know of nothing of which the administration in Dayton may be prouder than the fifty-five babies' lives which have been saved.

The facilities for public recreation have been extended far beyond those formerly prevailing. A self supporting public bathing beach has been opened, in connection with which next year, there will be operated a municipal dance hall and restaurant. Seventy-five families cultivated community gardens last summer; there were twenty-two experimental gardens for hun-

dreds of school children under the supervision of an expert gardener; and nearly three hundred vacant lots were prepared as gardens. The number of play grounds under public supervision has been doubled, and new equipment secured until there are now thirty-five play centers for young people.

In the treatment of adult delinquents, new policies are being tried—the moral effect of clean clothing and plenty of baths has been combined with outdoor labor which would otherwise have gone undone. In frequent cases men and women have been placed on probation and jobs secured for them. A municipal lodging house has been established where a half day's labor is exacted for a night's lodging with meals. A free legal aid bureau has been established for those who are too poor to secure private counsel. This division at a cost of \$625 has handled over seven hundred applications for services. The city's prosecutor on the other hand has done commendable work in settling family quarrels and back fence squabbles without appeal to the law.

In this paper it has been endeavored to show that the cost of government in Dayton and Springfield has not been excessive, nor has it materially increased when compared with the expenditures in previous years under other types of administration. Also that the results achieved have marched far beyond those in the great majority of municipalities. Compared with local conditions which formerly prevailed this progress has been even more striking. There has been criticism but happily much of it has come from men who are more interested in jobs and profits than in efficient and democratic local government. No little of this complaint has been born of prejudice against an administrator who came from another city.

It would perhaps be well had some means been secured for having all of these criticizing elements represented in the city commission where they might themselves have gone on record on the propositions about which they now complain. It will be interesting to note the effect of proportional representation upon this type of government, and experience in Dayton at least seems to indicate that its introduction would be of no small benefit. Our government is democratic; has awakened wider public in-

terest than ever before; is economical and efficient, but would be strengthened had it the support of definitely minded groups behind it.

Frankly, this discussion is by one who is prejudiced in the belief that the city manager plan is in theory fundamentally sound, and destined to solve in a limited measure our municipal problems. Applying such recognized tests of adequate local government as are available to a bureau of municipal research, I am convinced that Dayton and Springfield have secured governmental results equaled by very few municipalities in America.